













# THE SINGING LESSON.

BY JEAN INGELGLO.

A nightingale made a mistake;  
She sang a few notes out of tune;  
Her heart was ready to break,  
And she hid from the moon.  
She wrung her claws, poor thing,  
But was too proud to speak;  
She tucked her head under her wing,  
And pretended to be asleep!

A lark, an amaranth with a thrush,  
Came smiling up to the place;  
The nightingale felt herself blush,  
Though feathers hid her face;  
She knew they had heard her song,  
She felt them snicker and sneer;  
She thought this life was too long,  
And wished she could skip a year.

"Nightingale!" cooed a dove,  
"O nightingale! what's the use;  
You bird of beauty and love,  
Why behave like a goose?  
Don't shut your eyes to our sight  
Like a common, contemptible fowl;  
You bird of joy and delight,  
Why behave like an owl?"

Only think of all you have done;  
Only think of all you can do;  
A false note is really fun  
From such a bird as you!  
Lift up your proud little crest;  
Open your musical beak;  
Other birds have to do their best,  
You need only to speak."

The nightingale shyly took  
Her head from under her wing,  
And giving the dove a look,  
Straightaway began to sing.  
There was never a bird could pass;  
The night was divinely calm;  
And the people stood on the grass  
To hear that wonderful psalm!

The nightingale did not care,  
She only sang to the skies;  
Her song ascended there,  
And there she fixed her eyes.  
The people that stood below  
She knew but little about;  
And this was her moral I know  
If you'll try to find it out.

Christian Standard.

# THE BOY MAGICIAN.

OR

The Secrets of the Sea.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRISONER ON MID-OCEAN.

Late one summer afternoon a dozen years ago, a solitary white man stood before an idolatrous temple on an island in the South Pacific.

He was of middle age, tall, thin and gaunt, with rugged features and sorrowful eyes, and every sign of goodness and intelligence.

Beside him was a grim stone idol, in grotesque human form, more than twice as tall as himself, which he had just finished in his hands.

"It is done," he muttered. "And these heathens little suspect that I have cut my name and story into the base of this idol."

He ran his eye rapidly over the inscription in question. It was as follows:

"The 8th of May, 1852, I, David Lester, of the firm of Lester & Nichols, of Norfolk, Virginia, sailed as a passenger from Charleston to Hong Kong, via Cape Horn, in the ship 'Hecia'. A cyclone struck us in mid-ocean, the ship foundered, and we took to the boats, which all filled, with the exception of the one I was in. After drifting several days, during which my companions perished, I reached this island. The idolatrous inhabitants made me a slave in their temple, and for more than four years I have been doing menial office and carving images. I have been chained every night, and watched continually by day, but have nevertheless made three attempts at escape. I have been made mother—doubtless my last, as I am resolved to succeed or die, preferring death to a longer captivity. I therefore write these words upon this idol, praying any one who may see them to report my fate, if possible, to my family at Norfolk, Va. This inscription this 7th day of July, 1857."

For several minutes the prisoner contemplated these lines in silence and then aroused himself, looking warily around. "Three times I have tried to escape in a canoe," he muttered, "but have been caught, and visited with tortures. To be caught again in such an attempt will be the first opportunity I shall have to escape. I will risk all for freedom, and my family is becoming a positive madness. Oh, my God! what is that?"

He gazed in perfect stupefaction to the eastward, far out upon the ocean. There, miles and leagues away, was a ship, her white sails gleaming as she lay becalmed upon the waters.

"A ship! a ship!" cried Lester, sobbing. "At last, my heaven! At last my prayer is answered!"

On the east bank of the Elizabeth river, just out of Norfolk, and overlooking Hampton Roads, stood a beautiful cottage, the home of the wife and daughter of David Lester, the prisoner of the lone island in the far Pacific.

Near the close of a lovely afternoon in May, Mrs. Lester and her daughter sat together on their front veranda. The mother was a lovely, sweet-faced, and-eyed woman of two and thirty years. The daughter, Amy Lester, not yet fifteen, was a strange compound of child and woman.

"You are thinking of Father, dear mother?" murmured the maiden, as she marked the lady's longing gaze.

"Yes, child. Your father, my husband; where is he? Somewhere under the sea waves, wrecked on a hostile island, or languishing on a hostile shore? It is five years since I left us on that fatal voyage to China. My reason assures me that he is dead; yet Amy, I can only think of him as living."

"It is so with me, mother," said Amy, with a tremulous quiver of her lips. "I dream often that he is living—that he is coming home!"

"We need him in a hundred ways," said Mrs. Lester sighing. "If anything were to happen to me, Amy, I shudder to think what would become of you. You have been brought up in luxury and would feel keenly any change to poverty."

"Are we not rich, then, mother?" asked Amy in surprise.

"I supposed so, dear, until three years ago, replied the mother sadly.

Your father was a merchant and shipowner, a partner of Colonel Nichols. But two years ago Colonel Nichols informed me that the outstanding debts of the firm more than balanced the assets, in short, Amy, that he was on the verge of bankruptcy, his fortune and ours alike wrecked."

"I don't like Colonel Nichols," said Amy thoughtfully. "If he lost all his money with ours, how does he live in such grand style. To whom do his ships and great house belong?"

"To his nephew, Allen Bell. Colonel Nichols is Allen's guardian. The Colonel has nothing of his own, excepting a farm or two up country which was not risked in the business. Any contracted her little brow reflectively, and was about to reply, when the garden gate swung on its hinges, and a boyish figure came lightly up the walk. "It's Allen, mother—his father's boy," exclaimed Amy, smiling and blushing. "I'll bring him to you."

The young girl ran lightly down the veranda her step sunny, the new-comer linking her arm in his and drawing him gently toward the house.

who mature early into grand and noble men. Boy as he was, he loved Amy Lester with a pure and chivalrous love, which bade fair to deepen in time into the great love of his life.

He was the bearer of a letter from his uncle to Mrs. Lester, and having delivered it, he strolled with Amy down the wide garden walks into the cool shadows of the grove at the bottom of the garden.

"I've been expecting you this good while, Amy," said Amy with charming frankness. "I thought you would be down here to-day."

"We'll try that to-night, Amy," replied Allen. "The blue light show" began to appear. "I'm getting along finely in my chemistry, Amy. I like it best of all my studies."

"I am sure you do," said Amy earnestly. You are the nicest boy I ever saw. Allen Bell laughed aloud. Amy's child simplicity and outspoken truthfulness were her greatest charms in his eyes.

"The sight of that big young fellow," said Allen, "reminds me that I promised to meet Colonel Nichols on board of it directly after I delivered that letter to your mother. I must go now, but you may expect me as soon as it's dark."

He clasped her in his arms and kissed her. For a minute the youthful lovers stood at the garden gate, toward which they had slowly walked, and then they parted. Allen Bell went down to the big white steamer, and Amy went to her room.

"What is it mother?" cried Amy in wild alarm, springing to her side.

Mrs. Lester looked up to her daughter with a woe-stricken face.

"Oh, Amy," she cried, turning to the brave, childish heart for strength and comfort. "Colonel Nichols is writing to us. He is a beggar. He reminds me that he has asked me three times to marry him. And Amy, he says he knows your father to be a false man, and offers himself to me for the last time. He reminds me of my ill health, of your youth and helplessness. And he says—and Mrs. Lester's voice broke down in a tempest of sobbing—that on one hand he offers me wealth, comfort and happiness, and on the other poverty and sorrow. If I refuse him he swears to turn us out of our house to-morrow."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Amy, with a sharp cry, as he hid her face in her mother's bosom.

CHAPTER II.

ALLY ENTHRAIPE.

Before Allen Bell reached the big lying at the wharf, his uncle, Colonel Nichols, had been there and arranged with the Captain, who went by the name of Hilley, to carry Allen off to China, for white service the Colonel promised to give him, the Captain, the brig and ten thousand dollars, in case the boy never came back.

It was a murder, whose real name was Nichols, and Colonel Nichols knew it. And Colonel Nichols has robbed Mrs. Lester, and now wanted to rob his nephew and have him killed, and Hilley knew that, and resolved that Allen Bell should never see Norfolk again.

"Where is the lad?" he asked, as he and Colonel Nichols finished drinking success to their nefarious schemes, to which the Colonel replied:

"He should be here at this very moment. Ah, I hear his step on deck now! Here he comes!"

Even as he spoke Allen Bell came hurrying into the cabin, his face flushed with pleasurable excitement.

"I'm just in time to see you off, Captain Hilley," he said, not noticing the guilty looks of the conspirators. "The wind is fair, and the crew anxious. A good voyage to you, Captain. Bring me some rare shells when you return. They are for a little girl's cabinet, and must be pretty."

"Aye, aye, Mr. Allen," responded the Captain heartily. "Didn't you see my collection of shells in yonder stateroom? No? You are welcome to your choice of them all, sir."

He advanced and flung open the stateroom door.

Allen burst forward and looked in. With a quick thrust, Hilley pushed him into the little room and hurriedly locked the door.

With an exultant smile Colonel Nichols said aloud, and went ashore.

The next minute the hurried tramping of feet was blended with the songs of the stout seamen, as the brig moved slowly from the wharf toward the sea.

Allen's first thought, on finding himself shut up in Captain Hilley's stateroom, was that the two men were joking—merely intending to scare him a little, and then let him out; but he soon discovered that the *Quickstep*—the brig was so named—had left her wharf, and was standing down the Elizabeth river toward the ocean.

The cold flashed upon him.

"See it all!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "Hilley is taking me to sea with him! Captain Hilley!" he shouted, pounding on the door, "open the door this minute! Let me out, or it will be bad for you!"

No reply was made to him—no attention paid to his cries.

He saw that time was fast, and was stammered by the knowledge of his situation.

Nichols, who, on recognizing him, would without remorse consign him again to the mercies of the Pacific in his Indian canoe.

On inquiry Lester learned that the vessel was the *Cyclone*, and in the light of the cabin lamp recognized her Captain. Tearing off his priestly robe, and wiping the stain from his face with his coarse folds, he exclaimed:

"David Lester!" cried the Captain, turning ashy pale, and grasping his stationery seat as though he had received a shock.

When Lester wiped his brows and sat down, the Captain taking a seat opposite him. He had so much to ask, that his emotions choked his utterance, and prevented him from observing the look of deadly hatred with which the Captain regarded him. But he finally plied his questions fast, and learned that his wife yet lived, that his daughter Amy had grown into a lovely girl, and that both wife and daughter had long mourned him as dead. He also learned of his wife's poverty.

"Colonel Nichols settled up the firm affairs," said the Captain resolutely. "And there was nothing left for Mrs. Lester. She has been living on her bounty these two or three years? When your interest in this ship was sold, I bought it. The *Cyclone* was sold to me for \$10,000."

"But this is a base fraud!" exclaimed Lester. "The Colonel has been untrue to the trust I reposed in him. I have had suspicions of his integrity during my long years of exile, but have not dared to tell them. I'll make matters straight on my return. I can prove my claims and bring him to justice, the dastardly villain! My poor Margaret!" and he groaned.

Lester's threat concerning Nichols seemed to stir up all the malice of the Captain's nature. He beheld his interest in the ship as a carefully acquired, and most valued, and he hated still more the lawful owner whose right in the *Cyclone* he had usurped.

"Colonel Nichols speaks truly," he said. "Mrs. Lester need not be called 'poor.' Colonel Nichols has long been paying her attentions, and when I left port, five months ago, the story was, that they were engaged. But he has deceived me. He has loved her and meant to marry her. No doubt by this time they are married."

This cruel thrust struck home to the poor husband's heart, and uttering a great cry, he fell forward with his face upon the table, while the Captain regarded him with a look of mingled hatred and exultation.

Leaving his victim thus stunned, Captain Sales went on deck, and seeing that a storm was rising, and thinking the time favorable for getting rid of Lester, he informed the crew that the strange man in the cabin was an insane creature, whom it would be unsafe to keep on board, and easily convinced them that it was their duty, as they valued their own lives, to set him adrift again. He then went below, called Lester on deck, and at once set him adrift in a well-provisioned boat, notwithstanding the wretched man's piteous appeals for mercy.

The *Cyclone* then sailed on, and Lester perceived that he was soon lost sight of in the darkness. A short time afterward the storm broke furiously, and Captain Sales rubbed his hands as he thought of the certain fate of the poor wretch whom he had so recently exposed to its power.

But the storm was of short duration; Lester's boat rode it, and the next day he succeeded in reaching the Cloud Islands. His lamp as an emerald carver had preceded him, and the chief of the Cloud Islands, who was named Lanoti, at once compelled him to go to work on an idol, informing him that he should spend the remainder of his life in that odious service. The unhappy man was driven to despair by this terrible announcement. He toiled day after day, and night after night he planned to escape. But all his plans were in vain, as he was heavily ironed, and closely guarded at night. But finally, after months of disappointment, he attracted the attention of his employer by a feat, he succeeded in eluding their vigilance, and getting rid of his chains. He escaped from the guard-house, and dashed wildly toward the sheltering obscurity of a thick forest, which he reached in safety, but not before his flight had been discovered, and scores of the islanders had started in pursuit of him.

An overruling Providence had so ordered it, that a short time before Lester's escape, Allen Bell had been left by Captain Hilley on an uninhabited island, within sight of the group on which Lester then was. Allen had been dragged by Captain Hilley, and while in a deep sleep had been left on the island. He had a basket of provisions, and a full set of tools.

The boy on awaking, and finding himself thus left alone in the vast Pacific Ocean, was crushed by a sense of his calamity. But he was a brave and soon rallied, and set at work to make the best of his case. He built himself a hut, and having a lot of fireworks in his chest, he arranged them so that he could play them off with effect, in case any savages from the neighboring islands should come to molest him. His knowledge of chemistry, and of fireworks, and his skill as a ventriloquist, was so great that he had acquired the title of "The Boy Magician," which title he determined to make good in case any savage visitors should attempt to work him mischief. He had been in his new abode not a few days when he saw a fleet of canoes and sail-boats approaching his island, and hastily getting his fireworks in perfect order, he calmly awaited the arrival of the painted barbarians, whom he could readily distinguish eagerly gazing at his cabin.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOST FRENCH PRIDE OF ALL.

The summer slipped away, and September was drawing to its close.

One morning late in the month, Colonel Nichols sat in his office, idly drumming on his desk with his fingers, an expression of satisfaction on his features.

He had been persecuting Mrs. Lester with his attentions, which she had disdainfully repulsed. He had also conceived a violent desire to overtake and sell on her daughter Amy, who, believing that Allen had been sent off by Colonel Nichols had been a constant thorn in his side for months.

"What!" he muttered with a long-drawn breath, "I finished closing up my affairs yesterday. What is to be my next move? I can leave Norfolk at any time. It might not be a bad idea to take Mrs. Lester and my Cape Henry house. People begin to look odd to me here and they look on Mrs. Lester as an injured saint!"

He frowned darkly, as if unpleasant memories were recurring to him.

At this moment there sounded a heavy, uneven tread in the outer office. The clerks had all been discharged within the month, and there was no insider to new Nichols, therefore did not stir from his seat, nor trouble himself to inquire the business of the intruder.

The heavy tread approached the inner office, the door was opened and a man looked in.

"Captain Sales!" he ejaculated. "It can't be possible! Come, closing the door behind him."

It was indeed Captain Sales, of the ship *Cyclone*—the same man who had so indignantly rebuffed David Lester in the South Pacific, and in the very teeth of him he had supposed, of a terrible tempest."

The two men—biting companions—shook hands heartily.

"When did you arrive, Captain?" demanded Nichols, proffering a chair. This is a surprise! I wasn't expecting you this month!"

"I suppose not said Sales, seating himself in a chair, and looking at his watch. "I concluded you didn't see me, since you didn't come off. We had a gale all the way home that blew us right along. Never made a better voyage out and in."

Nichols went to a closet cupboard, and brought out a bottle of brandy and a tumbler, the mercuries of the Pacific in his Indian canoe.

"Have a drink," he said filling the glass. "How about your trading business? Seems to me you didn't stay long enough to do it."

"Well, I haven't done so well as usual, Colonel, that's a fact," replied Sales, between swallows of the liquor. "But I've got something of more importance to you than a thousand dollars more or less, Colonel."

"And what is that?" demanded Nichols. Sales tossed off the remainder of the brandy, set the glass down heavily as he responded:

"It's a piece of news that will come hard to you, Colonel. David Lester is alive!"

Nichols reeled as if a bullet had entered his heart. His complexion turned livid.

"Alive!" he repeated, in a shrill, cutting whisper. "He has come back? He is in Norfolk?"

He looked around him wildly, as if seeking an avenue of escape.

"No, Colonel, he is not here. He boarded us just after a calm in the South Pacific. I saw him face to face, heard him tell how the vessel he went out in had been lost in a cyclone, and how he alone remained alive to tell the tale."

"And you brought him back?" cried Nichols, in that shrill, incisive whisper, putting his hand, scared face close to that of Sales, and fairly starting the latter by the glance of evil meaning that shot from his bloodshot eyes. "You let him live—you who will lose by his life and gain by his death?"

A regretful expression crossed the face of Captain Sales.

"If I did, I didn't mean to," he exclaimed. "I was unable to come back, as I had to dispose of him in the quickest manner I thought there was a big storm coming so I set him adrift in an open boat. The storm blew over, and Lester, I am sure, is safe by the nearest island. He was a frail boat, the poorest of the lot, and I allowed him only a small allowance of provisions."

"Then I may be alive now on one of those Pacific islands!" ejaculated Nichols. "And he may be picked up by a vessel at any time, and come back to ruin me. I was sure he was dead. Tell me his name, and I'll send a vessel to fetch him. Sales complied with the order, while Nichols paced the floor with hurried steps.

"Yes, he must have gone back to the island he escaped from, or to some neighboring island," cried Nichols, when his confederate had concluded. "What a cursed fatality seems to pursue me! Sales, Lester is unable to come back, as I have to dispose of him in the quickest manner I thought there was a big storm coming so I set him adrift in an open boat. The storm blew over, and Lester, I am sure, is safe by the nearest island. He was a frail boat, the poorest of the lot, and I allowed him only a small allowance of provisions."

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